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MIDRAND DECLARATION

Text submitted by the President of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

We, the member States of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), gathered at Midrand, South Africa, for the ninth session of the Conference agree and state:

UNCTAD IX was characterized by frank assessments of UNCTAD's functioning made during the round tables of Heads of State, Multilateral Agencies and Ministers. This inspired member States to build a more effective organization capable of implementing its mandate in a changing world.

In 1992, UNCTAD VIII heralded *The Spirit of Cartagena*, a partnership for development. This was a clear recognition of the need for a new approach to assisting development. Four years later, it is clear that further vigorous initiatives are necessary to translate that spirit into reality.

Since Cartagena, the United Nations has held important global conferences on major economic and social themes. These have identified changes and challenges in the global economy, and highlighted the need for reform of the United Nations system. In addition, the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has strengthened the rules-based trading system and furthered the process of liberalization, opening new opportunities for sustainable development and growth.

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UNCTAD IX has responded to these changes and challenges by initiating important reforms designed to give new and real meaning to the partnership for development.

Globalization

Our economies continue to be unified by flows of trade, finance, information and technological change. This increased interdependence is a powerful impetus to liberalization of these flows. Competitive pressure on all economies has increased, and market forces play a pivotal role. The rules-based system of the WTO will facilitate positive integration of countries into the global trading system if the commitment to this objective is strengthened.

However, we must recognize that countries enter this system from very different starting points. Accordingly, the impact of globalization and liberalization is uneven. There are notable developing country successes where domestic reforms have provided increased dynamism to international trade and investment. Yet there remain problems of access to markets, capital and technology, and many grapple with the institutional transformation necessary for meaningful integration into the world economy.

The least developed countries (LDCs), particularly those in Africa, and other developing countries remain constrained by weak supply capabilities and are unable to benefit from trade. Marginalization, both among and within countries, has been exacerbated. Too many people continue to live in dire poverty. As we near a new millennium this is an intolerable situation.

It is in the interest of all countries that a mutually beneficial multilateral trading system continues to develop. This requires the recognition of differential impacts on countries and the solidarity necessary to ensure that all will benefit - a true partnership for development.

Partnerships

The partnership for development must be based upon a clear definition of roles, the establishment of common objectives and development of joint action. In practical terms this means:

(i) Strengthening intergovernmental cooperation between developed and developing countries;

(ii) Cooperation between developing countries should be enhanced with special attention to LDCs;

(iii) More effective coordination and complementarity of multilateral institutions;

(iv) The mobilization of human and material resources towards development through dialogue and common action between Governments and the civil society;

(v) Partnerships between the public and private sector to achieve higher growth rates and greater development.

UNCTAD's work

UNCTAD's mandate remains relevant as the focal point for dealing with trade and related issues of development. It must build upon its comparative advantage and offer support appropriate to the needs of developing countries to ensure that they participate in the world economy on a more equitable basis.

UNCTAD's policy research and analytical work must illuminate the changes in the global economy as they relate to trade, investment, technology, services and development. Such work must facilitate policy formulation within member States as they strive for development. It must lead to constructive policy dialogue among member States to enhance benefits of trade. It must respond to different and changing developmental needs in the ongoing process of integration in the global economy.

Policy formulation assistance requires appropriate technical support and cooperation in order to achieve concrete results. It is essential that special attention is paid to creating an overall enabling environment at a policy and institutional level for the LDCs.

In enhancing technical cooperation, UNCTAD will strengthen its cooperation and coordination with WTO and other multilateral institutions. Developing countries themselves are increasingly contributing to technical cooperation.

Member States must also be supported as they build transparent and accountable governance and administration in all sectors of society. This enhances trade and investment.

Institutional reform of UNCTAD

The comprehensive United Nations reform process is designed to refocus and reinvigorate international cooperation for peace and development. UNCTAD IX and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD have made a significant contribution to this process through the comprehensive changes that have been adopted. These changes support the more focused work of UNCTAD through streamlining the intergovernmental machinery, improving the method and quality

of expert input and focusing and integrating the secretariat's working methods. The results of these changes must be outputs that respond to the needs and demands of the member States.

In a rapidly changing environment it is essential to maintain the relevance of an organization's work. This can only be done through improved accountability based on assessment, review and transparency of operation. The UNCTAD Trade and Development Board must perform this oversight role.

To build on the political commitment of member States to the process initiated at this Conference and ensure its implementation, the President of UNCTAD IX should consider convening a special high-level review meeting two years prior to UNCTAD X.

Partnership initiatives

The Secretary-General of UNCTAD will convene a meeting with actors in development to advise him on how to enhance the participation of the civil society in UNCTAD to build a lasting partnership for development between non-governmental actors and UNCTAD.

South Africa, as President of UNCTAD IX, in consultation with its regional partners and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, will host a workshop on the partnership between the public and private sectors in mobilizing resources for development. The focus will be on the role of this partnership for LDCs and how other developing countries can work together with LDCs. South Africa will request the Asian Group and the Latin American and Caribbean Group to share their experience in this regard. It is appropriate that such a workshop take place in Africa, where the majority of LDCs are located.

South Africa to Thailand

At no time in world history has the destiny of all its many different peoples been so intertwined. This must lead to solidarity in action to eradicate poverty. It has been correctly stated in this Conference that no one can do for us what we will not do for ourselves. Our challenge is to ensure that all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development as an integral part of fundamental human rights, are promoted and protected.

Starting in South Africa - a country which chose a path of rejuvenation and hope - UNCTAD will traverse four years to Thailand - a country where significant progress has been achieved. When we reflect back on this path in the year 2000, may it be in the knowledge that our solidarity has improved the lives of people.